CRS Report for Congress

Instability in Chad

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Summary

The political and security situation in Chad is volatile. Ethnic clashes, banditry, and fighting between government forces and rebel groups, both Chadian and Sudanese, have contributed to a worsening security situation in the east. The instability has forced an estimated 180,000 Chadians from their homes in the past three years. In addition to this internal displacement, some 285,000 refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Darfur region of Sudan have fled violence in their own countries and now live in refugee camps in eastern Chad. With Chadian security forces stretched thin, the threat of bandit attacks on these camps and on aid workers has escalated. The instability has also impacted some 700,000 Chadians whose communities have been disrupted by fighting and strained by the presence of the displaced. The United Nations and the European Union are preparing to deploy a multidimensional presence in Chad and the neighboring CAR to improve security in the region so as to facilitate the safe and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. This report will be updated to reflect major developments.

Chad, a land-locked country roughly twice the size of Texas, has had a turbulent history of religious and ethnic conflict and intermittent civil war in its 40 years of independence. Bordered by Libya to the north and Sudan to the east, it is considered to be among the world's ten poorest countries, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index. Persistent conflict has hindered the country's development, despite significant oil reserves. One in five children dies before the age of five. Chad also is perceived to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world.[1] *Foreign Policy* magazine has ranked Chad fifth on its index of failed states.[2]

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[1] According to Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures the perceptions of business people and country analysts regarding the degree of corruption among public officials and politicians, Chad ranks 172 out of 180 countries [http://www.transparency.org].

[2] The Washington-based magazine uses economic, social, political, and military indicators to rank countries by their "vulnerability to violent internal conflict and social dysfunction." Only Sudan,

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Political Instability. Chad gained its independence from France in 1960. The country has been politically unstable since 1965, when a tax protest led northern, Islamic tribes to rebel against the southern, Christian-dominated government. Years of authoritarian rule and civil war followed, interspersed with international diplomacy and armed interventions.

Chad's current president, Idriss Déby Itno, a former general, took power by force when he launched a rebellion against then-President Hissein Habre from neighboring Sudan in 1989. Déby's forces, reportedly aided by Libya and Sudan and largely unopposed by French troops stationed in Chad, seized the capital, N'Djamena, in 1990, forcing Habre into exile. Habre is slated to be tried in Senegal for human rights abuses committed under his regime. Déby, named president in 1991, pledged to create a democratic multi-party political system. Chad's first multi-party presidential elections were held in early 1996;

> **Chad at a Glance**
>
> **Population:** 9.9 million (2007)
> **Population Growth Rate:** 2.32% (2007)
> **Gross National Income (GNI):**
> $4.7 billion (2006)
> **GNI per Capita:** $480 (2006)
> **Key Exports:** Oil, cotton, cattle, gum arabic
> **Religions:** Muslim 51%, Christian 35%, indigenous beliefs 14%
> **Language:** French and Arabic (official), Sara, and more than 120 indigenous languages and dialects
> **Under-5 Mortality Rate:**
> 208 deaths per 1,000 (2005)
> **Life Expectancy:** 47.2 years (2007)
> **HIV/AIDS Adult Prevalence:** 3.3% (2005)
> **Literacy:** Male: 56%; Female: 39% (2003)
> Sources: CIA; UNAIDS; World Bank

legislative elections followed in early 1997. Déby won re-election in 2001, and his party won a majority of seats in the 2002 legislative elections. According to the State Department's annual human rights reports, Chad's elections have all been marked by irregularities and fraud. The opposition boycotted the most recent elections, held in 2006 after the constitution was amended to allow Déby a third term.

President Déby's perceived lack of legitimacy among opposition groups has increased political tensions. He has faced several coup attempts, and diverse armed political and regional factions have been active since the 1990s. Shifting rebel alliances, which include defectors from Déby's government, gained strength in the east in 2005-2006 and launched a series of raids on strategic government positions. Inter-communal violence not directly related to the rebellion also increased. President Déby declared a state of emergency in November 2006.[3] Critics charge that the government has used the state of emergency, which prohibits public rallies and political campaigning and allows the government to censor the press, to silence opposition. The state of emergency also granted emergency powers in the east to regional military governors, or "resident ministers," reducing local government authority.

In October 2007, the government signed a peace agreement in Sirte, Libya with the main rebel groups based in eastern Chad. However, the agreement has yet to be fully

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[2] (...continued)
Iraq, Somalia and Zimbabwe are considered to be more unstable [http://www.foreignpolicy.com].

[3] The 2006 state of emergency lasted four months and applied to N'Djamena and select regions in the east, north and south. It was reissued in October 2007 for 3 regions in the east and north.

implemented, and the fighting has resumed. The Sirte agreement is the latest in a series of failed negotiations to bring a peaceful settlement to the rebellion. In December 2006, Déby signed a peace agreement with Mahamat Nour, then-leader of a coalition of 13 rebel groups. Nour was appointed Minister of Defense in March 2007. Fighting between his forces and the national army resumed in November 2007, and Nour, who was subsequently dismissed from the government, has reportedly fled to Sudan.

Negotiations between the government and non-armed opposition groups may hold more promise than those with the armed groups. The government initiated a dialogue with members of the political opposition in early 2007; in August, the parties agreed to postpone the 2007 legislative elections to 2009 to allow a new census and the creation of a more representative electoral commission. President Déby has created a committee to ensure implementation of the agreement; the African Union, the European Union, and the United Nations serve as observers on that committee.

Ethnic Conflict. Chad's ethnic rivalries are complex and fluid, and they have been compounded by conflict over land and limited natural resources such as water. Ethnic violence between Nour's ethnic group, the Tama, and President Déby's ethnic group, the Zaghawa, both non-Arab, has become an increasing focus of concern. Conflict within the factionalized Zaghawa tribe also is a factor. The Zaghawa, who compose less than 3% of Chad's population, control a majority of government positions. Both Chad and the Darfur region of Sudan are home to the Zaghawa, elements of which have played key roles in Chad's complex inter-ethnic alliances and conflicts and in the Darfur conflict.

Regional Conflict.[4] The current conflict in Darfur, which began in early 2003, has displaced more than two million Sudanese and led large numbers to flee into Chad, generating a humanitarian crisis in the east. Refugee inflows from Darfur and the CAR have also increased social tensions linked to increasing demand on local resources, despite the provision of aid to the refugees by the United Nations (U.N.) and other international aid groups. The conflict has heightened political instability in Chad. Chad and Sudan have periodically accused one another of sponsoring rebellions against their respective governments. Despite a peace agreement signed by the two countries in Saudi Arabia in May 2007, the accusations continue.

In October 2007, six French aid workers from the Paris-based charity Zoe's Ark were arrested by Chadian authorities on charges of abduction and fraud after they attempted to fly 103 Chadian children to Europe.[5] Eleven European flight crew members and journalists were arrested with the aid workers and were later released. The majority of the children, whom the aid workers claimed were orphans from Darfur, were, in fact, native Chadians, many of whom still had at least one living parent or adult guardian. As a result of the incident, Chad has reportedly tightened its oversight of non-governmental organizations working in the country and increased travel restrictions. Aid agencies contend that these new restrictions impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

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[4] For more information on the conflicts in Sudan and the CAR, see CRS Report RL33574, *Sudan: The Crisis in Darfur and the Status of the North-South Peace Agreement* and CRS Report RS22751, *The Central African Republic* both by Ted Dagne.

[5] The six were repatriated to France under a bilateral accord between Chad and France, where they will serve eight-year sentences as pronounced by a Chadian court.

The United Nations currently maintains 12 refugee camps in eastern Chad and four in the south. In addition to the estimated 240,000 Sudanese refugees, the camps provide shelter for some 45,000 refugees from the CAR and as many as 180,000 displaced Chadians.[6] The camps, and the host communities, struggle with shortages of water and firewood. The region where the camps in the east are located has been plagued by insecurity and violence, and some international humanitarian aid compounds have been looted and aid workers threatened or attacked. Media reports suggest that as few as 250 Chadian troops are available to provide security for all the camps in the region. The United Nations had repeatedly pressed the government to allow an international peacekeeping force to secure the borders with Sudan and the CAR. President Déby opposed the U.N. proposals until June 2007, when the European Union offered to provide an EU peacekeeping force (primarily from France, which has been Chad's strongest military ally and one of its largest bilateral donors), which would then limit the United Nations to an administrative role.

U.N. Presence and EU Peacekeepers. On September 25, 2007, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1778, approving the establishment of a multinational presence in Chad and the Central African Republic to (1) contribute to the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and civilians in danger; (2) facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance; and (3) create favorable conditions for reconstruction and economic and social development. Based on Resolution 1778, two multinational bodies, a U.N. mission and a European Union (EU) military force, have been created under a single mandate.[7] The U.N. presence, known as the U.N. Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), will be responsible for police training and reinforcing judicial infrastructure, and will work with Chadian forces to reinforce safety for refugees, IDPs, and aid agencies in the camps in the east. The EU force, known as EUFOR Chad/CAR (hereafter EUFOR), is expected to provide general security for civilians and facilitate the free movement of humanitarian assistance and personnel, and is authorized to use military force, whereas MINURCAT is not.

Some humanitarian officials have expressed concern that having two separate international missions in Chad may prove confusing for the local population and aid workers, as well for the region's various rebel groups. At least one rebel group has warned that it will consider the EU force a "foreign occupation army," because it will include French forces, whom the rebels do not see as neutral. French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced in December 2007 that EUFOR would deploy to the region in spite of these threats. MINURCAT, which is expected to include some 300 police and 50 military liaison officers, as well as civilian personnel, has already begun police training in N'Djamena. According to U.N. Security Council Report S/2007/739, Chadian gendarmes currently guarding the camps are expected to hand-over security responsibilities for the camps to the MINURCAT-trained police by April 2008. EUFOR's deployment of 3,700 troops, originally expected in November 2007, has been delayed by funding and logistical challenges. According to U.N. officials, the MINURCAT mission will not be deployed to the east, due to insecurity, until EUFOR deploys.

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[6] Refugee and IDP figures provided by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

[7] This "dual-mission system," with a combined U.N.-EU mandate, is the first of its kind, according to the United Nations. "Chad: Dual Peacekeeping Mission Seeks to Dispel Confusion," *IRIN*, January 11, 2008, from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Child Soldiers. According to U.N. estimates, there may be as many as 10,000 children used in combat and non-combat roles by Chadian rebel groups, paramilitary forces, and its national army. The government denied the existence of child soldiers in its army until May 2007, when it signed an agreement with UNICEF to end recruitment of persons under age 18 and begin demobilization of those already within its security forces. According to Human Rights Watch the government continues to limit access by international child protection officials to military installations to verify demobilization efforts.[8] Humanitarian officials have expressed serious concerns regarding the recruitment of children by rebel groups and local self-defense militias in and around refugee camps.[9]

Oil and the Economy. Eighty percent of Chad's population is dependent on subsistence farming and herding, and droughts and locust infestations continue to affect food production and contribute to a high rate of malnutrition. When Chad began oil production in 2003, many Chadians had high expectations that oil revenues might serve as a catalyst for economic growth and socio-economic development. Corruption, weak state institutions, and chronic instability, however, threaten to undermine advances made in the oil sector and could deter future high capital investment projects elsewhere in the region. The Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project, reportedly the largest single international investment in Sub-Saharan Africa, is a $4 billion World Bank-backed initiative to develop oil fields in Chad's southern Doba region and to export the oil through a 665-mile pipeline to offshore oil loading facilities on Cameroon's Atlantic coast.[10] World Bank funding for the project was conditional on a portion of the oil revenues being held in a British bank account from which the Chadian government could only draw for poverty-reduction projects in areas like health, education, and the environment. In 2006, the World Bank suspended loans to Chad and froze oil revenue accounts after the government changed its revenue management law and significantly increased military spending. Chad and the World Bank reached a compromise in June 2006, allowing the government to use 30% (formerly 20%) of oil revenues for its own purposes, while the remainder will continue to be used for development programs.

U.S.-Chadian Relations. The United States has provided over $286 million in humanitarian assistance to eastern Chad since the onset of the humanitarian crisis in FY2004. According to the Bush Administration's FY2008 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, U.S. foreign policy priorities in Chad include 1) ensuring stability; 2) promoting democracy and respect for human rights; 3) resolving the refugee crisis in the east; 4) strengthening Chadian capacity to deter terrorist threats and professionalizing the military; 5) encouraging responsible use of oil revenues; 6) improving stewardship of water, land, and forest resources; and 7) supporting health and social programs. The U.S. Agency for International Development's Mission in Chad was formally closed in 1995 due to declining funding and security concerns; USAID assistance, much of which consists of monetized food aid to support health and agriculture initiatives, is coordinated through its East Africa regional office in Kenya. The U.S. Treasury Department has provided technical assistance to the country's oil revenue management oversight body to promote transparency.

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[8] Human Rights Watch, *Early to War: Child Soldiers in the Chad Conflict*, July 2007.

[9] U.N. Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Chad," S/2007/400, July 3, 2007.

[10] In addition to the World Bank, sponsors include ExxonMobile (with 40% of the private equity), Malaysia's Petronas (35%), and Chevron-Texaco (25%).

Despite concerns regarding poor governance, the Bush Administration considers the Déby government an ally in the war on terror. In March 2004, elements of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) (an Algerian terrorist organization that renamed itself Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in January 2007) entered Chadian territory and met resistance from Chadian armed forces. The United States has provided security assistance and training to the Chadian army with International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds. Chad is a part of the Trans-Saharan Counter-terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), an interagency effort that aims to increase Chad's border protection and regional counterterrorism capabilities, as well as "to promote democratic governance as a means to discredit terrorist ideology."[11] The FY2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act limits funding provided to Chad for IMET to Expanded IMET (E-IMET), training that attempts to promote "democratic values" through efforts to improve a government's management of its defense resources, ensure its systems of military justice are in accordance with human rights, and foster a greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military.[12] The Administration has discontinued demining assistance due to "institutional weakness and a lack of political will to address the problem." Landmines, many of which were laid in the 1980s, continue to kill hundreds of Chadians annually, and approximately 80% of the victims are children, according to U.N. Mine Action.

Congress has expressed concern for the ongoing violence and humanitarian crisis in the region through various resolutions, authorization and appropriations legislation during the 110th Congress. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Africa held a hearing on the impact of the Darfur crisis on Chad and the CAR in March 2007. S. 2135, the Child Soldiers Accountability Act of 2007, introduced by Senator Richard Durbin, could make Chad ineligible for military assistance if passed, unless such assistance supports demobilization efforts or promotes professionalization of the military.

Prospects. Persistent conflict with rebels in the north and east; refugee inflows and instability from the conflict in Darfur; and new dimensions to ethnic tensions have all contributed to concerns for Chad's future. Some analysts have also expressed concern that the Tuareg rebellion in Mali and Niger could merge with the ongoing conflict in Chad, the CAR, and Sudan to create a much wider regional war.[13] Under President Déby, Chad has made limited progress toward democracy. Human rights conditions remain notably poor, in part due to the actions of state security forces; freedom of expression is often curtailed; and many critics and observers see the government as lacking in transparency, accountability, and functional capacities. Reports of human right abuses, including sexual violence against women, are particularly high in the country's conflict zones. Prospective increases in state oil revenues — coupled with mandatory development provisions governing their use — and multifaceted international assistance to bolster political and economic reform may result in more participatory governance and economic growth in Chad. However, if the Déby government does not embrace political and economic reforms, popular resentment against those in power may perpetuate the current instability.

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[11] Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs James Swann at the Senate Foreign Relations Africa Subcommittee hearing on Chad and the CAR, March 20, 2007.

[12] For more information, see [http://www.dsca.mil/programs/eimet/eimet_default.htm].

[13] Some have suggested that the Sudanese government may be supporting the Tuareg rebels in Niger to foment unrest along Déby's western border. See Colin Thomas- Jensen and Maggie Fick, "Foreign Assistance Follies in Niger," *Online Africa Policy Forum,* Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 4, 2007.